



A safety guide for launch drivers

Launches are often used for coaching, marshalling and rescue purposes.

1. Drivers and other occupants of the craft shall wear approved lifejackets or buoyancy aids.
2. For whatever purpose they are employed, launches must carry in addition to a fully stocked First Aid kit, the following equipment and safety aids
 - A sound signalling device (capable of attracting attention over a distance of 200 metres).
 - Simple handholds fixed to the side of the launch to provide assistance to any person being rescued and provide self-help should the driver fall overboard.
 - A sharp knife with carrying sheath.
 - A paddle.
 - Engine cut-out lanyard device.(kill-cord)
 - A proprietary “throw line” or a “grab line” (min 15 metres) with a large knot tied in one end to assist throwing.
 - Thermal blankets.

Launches involved in activities between the hours of sunset and sunrise are required to be fitted with lights as laid down in “Rules for Mariners” published by the Department of Transport or as prescribed by the appropriate navigation authority

3. General Points:

Due to wind and engine noises, trying to shout from a moving powerboat is not very successful. Get in close, stop and speak clearly. Choose the right clothing for the prevailing weather conditions and bear in mind the length of time afloat the possible need for one crewmember to enter the water, inactivity for long periods in cold weather and the need for agility when moving about the boat. Hot drinks on cold days, and vice versa, will maintain the efficiency of the crew. Boat handling skills should be second nature as that you can concentrate on the task of rescue without having to think about how you are going to get the boat into the right position. When manoeuvring outboard powered boats in close quarters make sure that the correct helm is applied before engaging forward and reverse gear. Look in the direction of travel and check the way is clear.

4. Recovering from the water:

When a rower needs to be recovered from the water, the following precautions must be observed:

- The only time high-speed manoeuvres should be used is when making the approach to the scene of trouble or when taking injured rowers back to the landing stage.
- Any high-speed approach to the scene must make allowance for the safety of other river users. Use the klaxon or audible warning device to alert other craft. Give way if need be.
- The final approach to the rower in the water must be made carefully and at low speed, in order to weigh up the situation and to avoid alarming the person in the water.
- On approach provide buoyancy aid (life-ring or similar) to person in the water.
- Talk to the person in the water. Make sure they understand what you intend to do and what you want them to do.
- Approach from downstream/downwind, as appropriate, in order to maintain control over speed and steering.
- When bringing the rower aboard, the engine must be turned off so that no injury can be inflicted by the propeller blades. Leaving the gear lever in neutral is not enough as it is easy to knock it whilst attempting to get the rower on board. If the speed of the current or other hazards make this precaution dangerous, attempt to use a handhold (e.g. overhanging tree branch) to hold position.
- Should the rower require urgent First Aid treatment this should be applied before moving off.
- Where there are several rowers in the water, priority should be given to any injured or younger rowers.